

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 15474 201426Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SAB-01

IO-10 AID-05 PC-01 SAJ-01 /089 W

----- 092895

O R 201300Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2334

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

USIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 15474

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH: INDIAN REACTION AND CONCERN OF BANGLADESH
DIPLOMATS

REF: NEW DELHI 15342

SUMMARY: THE CONGRESS PARTY'S UNOFFICIAL DAILY "NATIONAL
HERALD" NOVEMBER 20 CARRIED AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG
EDITORIAL ON BANGLADESH. IT SAID THERE WAS NO EARLY PROS-
PECT OF A RETURN TO NORMALCY THERE, THAT A RETURN OF THE
MAJORS WOULD BE "PROOF POSITIVE" THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE RECENT BLOOD-LETTING REMAIN IN POWER IN DACCA, AND
THAT INDIA MUST OPPOSE THE "BLOOD-THIRSTY CLIQUE" TRYING
TO GET THE UPPPER HAND IN THE GOB. STORIES ON BANGLADESH
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 15474 201426Z

CONTINUE TO RECEIVE FRONT PAGE COVERAGE IN SEVERAL DELHI

PAPERS. A NOVEMBER 19 EDITORIAL IN A PRO-CONGRESS CALCUTTA PAPER EXPRESSES INDIAN CONCERN ABOUT THE SAFETY OF ITS NATIONALS FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF A GRENADE IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER IN DACCA. IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL NOVEMBER 20, THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION EMOTIONALLY ARGUED THAT INDIA WAS BUILDING UP TO INTERVENE IN BANGLADESH. HE THOUGHT THAT THE GOI WOULD SUPPORT BANGLADESH ELEMENTS OPPOSED TO THE GOB AND THAT THIS WAS MORE LIKELY THAN DIRECT MILITARY INTERVENTION. SUCH COVERT ACTIVITY, HE SAID, HAD PROBABLY ALREADY BEGUN. THE FIRST SECRETARY SAID OTHER COLLEAGUES AT THE HIGH COMMISSION SHARED HIS VIEWS BUT REFUSED SPECIFICALLY TO INCLUDE HIS HIGH COMMISSIONER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NOVEMBER 20 EDITION OF THE CONGRESS-R'S UNOFFICIAL DAILY, "NATIONAL HERALD," PUBLISHED ONE OF THE STRONGEST EDITORIALS WE HAVE SEEN TO DATE ON BANGLADESH. THE PIECE BEGINS: "THERE SEEMS NO EARLY PROSPECT OF NORMALCY BEING RESTORED IN BANGLADESH." REFERRING TO THE REPORTS ABOUT THE LIKELY RETURN OF THE MAJORS NOW IN BANGKOK TO BANGLADESH, THE "HERALD" STATES: "THIS IS PROOF POSITIVE THAT ELEMENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR BANGLADESH'S RECENT BLOOD-STAINED HISTORY CONTINUE TO BE IN POWER IN DACCA." THE PAPER CLAIMS THAT THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN JOURNALISTS RESPONSIBLE FOR STORIES OF INDIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN BANGLADESH WERE BRIEFED BY THE "ANTI-INDIAN FACTION IN THE (BANGLADESH) ARMY." IN INDIA IS SAID TO CONTINUE "STEADFAST IN ITS REGARD FOR BANGLADESH AND WILL DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO ENABLE IT TO SETTLE DOWN AFTER THE RECENT TRAGIC EVENTS...IT WOULD BE IDLE TO PRETEND THAT IT IS A DISINTERESTED SPECTATOR OF THE BANGLADESH SCENE." THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT INDIA "MUST, THEREFORE, MAKE CLEAR THAT IT WILL OPPOSE THE BLOOD-THIRSTY CLIQUE THAT IS TRYING TO GET THE UPPER HAND IN THE GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH."

2. THE NOVEMBER 20V PRESS FRONT-PAGES REPORTS ATTRIBUTED TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN IN WASHINGTON CONFIRMING TROUBLE IN THE BANGLADESH MILITARY DURING THE PAST TWO

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 15474 201426Z

WEEKS. THE SPOKESMAN IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT "DISCIPLINE IS BEING RESTORED AND CONDITIONS ARE RETURNING TO NORMAL." A REPORT IS ATTRIBUTED TO THE PTI WIRE SERVICE THAT CHITTAGONG REMAINS A "PANIC-STRICKEN TOWN." A UNI WIRE SERVICE DESPATCH REPORTS THAT LOWER GRADE ARMY OFFICERS OF THE SADIPUR CANTONMENT IN RANGPUR DISTRICT STAGED A DEMONSTRATION IN BEHALF OF DEMANDS FOR INCREASED PAY AND BENEFITS. THE PRESS GIVES PROMINENT COVERAGE TO A BBC STORY QUOTING

COL. ABDUL RASHEED FROM BANGKOK THAT THE MAJORS WILL BE RETURNING TO BANGLADESH SHORTLY.

3. PRO-CONGRESS CALCUTTA DAILY AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA DEVOTES ITS LEAD EDITORIAL NOVEMBER 19 TO BANGLADESH, UNDER THE HEADING "MATTER OF CONCERN." PAPERS SAYS THE DISCOVERY OF A GRENADE IN AREA OF THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION DACCA "INCREASES INDIA'S CONCERN...ABOUT THE SAFETY OF INDIAN NATIONALS AND THEIR PROPERTY." PAPER CONTINUES: "IT IS HOPED THAT CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF INDIA AND BANGLADESH WILL ENSURE THE SECURITY OF INDIAN NATIONALS AND REMOVE THE UNEASINESS OF THE PUBLIC IN THIS COUNTRY." EDITORIAL CONCLUDES ON A CONCILIATORY NOTE SAYING: "INDIA'S CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF HER NATIONALS IMPLIES NO CHANGE IN HER ATTITUDE TOWARDS BANGLADESH."

4. THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION IN NEW DELHI, ZIAUS SHAMS CHOWDHURY, EXPRESSED HIS VERY GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE LIKELIHOOD OF INDIAN INTERVENTION IN BANGLADESH IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF NOVEMBER 20. CHOWDHURY THOUGHT THE INDIANS WERE MORE LIKELY TO INTER- ZVENE BY SUPPORTING BANGLADESH ELEMENTS HOSTILE TO THE GOB THAN BY SENDING INDIAN TROOPS ACROSS THE BORDER. HE SAID THIS FORM OF COVERT INTERVENTION HAD PROBABLY ALREADY BEGUN. CHOWDHURY, WHO CLAIMED TO BE REFLECTING THE SENTIMENTS OF HIS OTHER COLLEAGUES AT THE HIGH COMMISSION, POINTED TO A BUILDUP IN THE INDIAN PRESS AGAINST THE PRESENT REGIME IN BANGLADESH. HE CLALIMED THAT HIS SUSPICIONS WERE INCREASED BY UNSPECIFIED CONVERSATIONS WITH INDIANS HERE. CHOWDHURY NOTED THE STATEMENT OF THE GOB SPOKESMAN NOVEMBER 18 ON THE GRENADE DISCOVERED AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER IN DACCA (REPORTED DACCA 5708 NOTAL). HE ARGUED THAT A LIKELY EXPLANATION FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 NEW DE 15474 201426Z

INCIDENT WAS THAT THE INDIANS THEMSELVES HAD PLANTED THE GRENADE AS A PROVOCATION. CHOWDHURY WAS PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS ABOUT THE HOSTILE ATTITUDE OF THE USSR TOWARD THE REGIME IN DACCA AND APPEALED FOR USG SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY OF HIS COUNTRY.

5. COMMENT: CHOWDHURY'S PRESENTATION AND APPEAL WAS A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND PERSONAL ONE. IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S QUESTION WHETHER THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SHARED HIS VIEWS, CHOWDHURY WOULD ONLY SAY THAT HE MOST LIKELY DID SO.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, INTERVENTION, ALLEGATIONS, GRENADES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NEWDE15474
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750404-0869
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751125/aaaaavnf.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 NEW DELHI 15342
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BANGLADESH: INDIAN REACTION AND CONCERN OF BANGLADESH DIPLOMATS
TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006